Glossary

Acid: any substance with a pH level below 7

Acidophilic vegetation: vegetation that thrives in acidic soils or water

Adaptation: an alteration or adjustment, often hereditary, by which a species or individual improves its condition as it relates to its environment

Aesthetic: of, or pertaining to the sense of beautiful

Alkalinity: a pH level above 7

Anaerobic: living in the absence of oxygen (vs. aerobic: living in the presence of oxygen)

Aquatic: lives in or on water

Biodiversity: the sum of all species of plants and animals. An ecosystem is considered healthy when it supports the most diverse numbers and types of species it is capable of supporting.

Biogeochemical cycle: the transport and transformation of chemicals in an ecosystem

Buffer zone: land adjacent to a sensitive area that minimizes outside impact

Channelization: straightening a waterway to remove meanders. Concrete often is used to line the sides and bottom of the channel.

Classification: the systematic grouping of organisms or ecosystems into categories based on shared characteristics or traits

Closed system: a system that has little or no exchange of materials

Conservation easement: a legal device that allows owners to divide up the set of rights that their ownership entails

Constructed wetland: wetland specifically designed to treat both point and nonpoint sources of water pollution

Creation, wetland: conversion of an upland area into a wetland where a wetland never existed

Decomposition: the breakdown of organic or chemical matter by microbes

Delineate: determination of the boundary between wetland and upland

Denitrification: process by which nitrogen is removed from soils by bacterial action

Detritus: dead and decomposing plant and animal material

Dike: an embankment of earth and rock built to prevent floods

Discharge site: the area in a wetland where the water table intersects ground surface and the groundwater becomes accessible

Dredging: process of excavating materials from waters

Ecosystem: a community of plants and animals interacting with one another and with their physical environment

Edge effect: a natural phenomenon by which the area between two distinct ecosystems has the greatest biodiversity

Emergent: objects or organisms that are partly in water and partly exposed, such as plants that are rooted in water but whose upper parts are aerial or floating. Emergent wetland vegetation includes erect, rooted, herbaceous vegetation, such as sedges, rushes, and grasses

Endangered: any species that is in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range

Enhancement, wetland: improvement, maintenance and management of existing wetlands to benefit a particular function or value, possibly at the expense of other wetland values

Estuarine: tidal marshes that are semi-enclosed by land and have changing salinity levels due tot he estuarine environment

Evaporation: the conversion of water to vapor

Evapotranspiration: the loss of water from the soil by evaporation and by transpiration of water from plants

Facultative: a plant species that has an equal possibility of occurring in wetlands and uplands; one of five categories used to determine whether or not vegetation is hydrophytic

Flashy: when a stream fills to capacity or floods immediately during rain events; occurs when a large percentage of the watershed surface is impervious and stormwater runoff enters streams rapidly

Flood duration: the amount of time a wetland is under standing water

Flood frequency: the average number of times a wetland is flooded during a particular period of time

Floodplain: the flat area of land adjacent to a stream; stores and dissipates floodwaters

Food web: elaborate, interconnected feeding relationships in an ecosystem

Function: any biological, chemical or ecological process that a wetland performs, such as nutrient removal, wildlife habitat support and sediment trapping

Germination: beginning or causing to grow; sprout

Glaciers: huge masses of moving ice originating from compacted snow

Gley: soil condition resulting from prolonged soil saturation which is manifested by the presence of bluish or greenish color throughout the soil; gleying occurs under reducing soil conditions resulting from soil saturation

Greenway: linear, open space established along a natural corridor, such as a riverfront, or along a scenic route

Groundwater: water beneath the Earth's surface

Habitat: when an area between two distinct ecosystems has the greatest biodiversity: the area or environment in which an organism lives

Headwaters: origins of streams and rivers

Hydric soil: soil found in saturated, anaerobic environments; usually characterized by a gray or mottled appearance

Hydric: characterized by or requiring considerable moisture

Hydrology: the study of the properties, distribution and effects of water on the Earth's surface, in soils and underlying rocks, and in the atmosphere

Hydrologic regime: how water moves in and out of the wetland system

Hydroperiod: the seasonal level of water in a wetland, includes the frequency, timing, duration and amount of flooding

Hydrophyte: vegetation that has adapted to thrive in wet conditions; typically found in wetland habitats

Impermeable: substrate through which water cannot pass

Inflow: water entering a system

Inorganic: not composed of organic matter

Interflow: water flowing through the soil beneath the surface

Intrinsic: of, or pertaining to the essential nature of a thing; inherent

Invasive: species that tends to spread and is considered a nuisance

Jurisdictional wetland: wetland regulated under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act which meet the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers definition (must exhibit all three characteristics - hydrology, hydrophytes and hydric soils)

Lacustrine: a freshwater system associated with a lake; lacustrine wetlands occur on the edges of lakes where the water depth is less than 2 meters (6.6 feet)

Land trust: non-profit organization that owns and manages lands that contain valuable resources

Levee: an embankment raised to prevent a river from overflowing

Macroinvertebrates: animals lacking a backbone and generally visible to the naked eye; larger than .5 millimeters

Marine: of, or pertaining to the ocean; marine wetlands are those associated with the high energy coastline

Microbes: minute life forms

Microorganisms: animals or plants of microscopic size

Migration: the movement of a population away from and back to a point of origin; sometimes requires more than one generation to complete the migratory cycle

Mitigation: the practice of allowing unavoidable losses of wetlands in exchange for their replacement elsewhere through restoration or by creation of new wetlands

Mitigation bank: a wetland area that has been restored, created, enhanced or preserved and set aside to compensate for future conversions of wetlands into nonwetland areas

Morphological: pertaining to the form and structure of living organisms

Mottles: blotches, streaks or spots of bright red and orange indicating the presence of a high water table

Muck: organic hydric soil in which the plant materials are extremely decomposed and form a greasy texture

Native: originally living, growing or produced in a certain place; indigenous

Neutral: any substance with a pH level of 7

Niche: the area and function occupied by an organism within a habitat

Nitrate: a chemical used in fertilizer, which can cause water pollution

Nutrient cycle: the pathways by which organic materials like nitrogen move through the environment

Obligate: plant species that occur in wetlands 99 percent of the time; one of five indicator categories used to determine if vegetation at a site is hydrophitic

Open system: a system with a high degree of material exchange

Organic: material containing carbon as the result of once being alive

Organic matter: plant and animal residue in the soil in various stages of decomposition

Outflow: water flowing out of an area

Overland flow: water flowing over the surface of the land; runoff

Palustrine: freshwater, shallow wetlands that are not riverine or lacustrine, such as marshes or bogs

Peat: a deposit of partially decomposed or undecomposed plant material; accumulates in places that are sufficiently wet to prevent decomposition from keeping pace with the production of organic matter

Perched: wetland systems in which soils do not allow water to pass through them

Permit: a legal document or certificate giving permission to do something

Persistent emergent: emergent vegetation that remains past the growing season

Pesticide: any chemical designed to kill or inhibit the growth of an organism that people consider undesirable

pH: petaining to the level of acididy or alkalinity of a substance

Physiology: the function of a particular structure, organ or organism

Primary productivity: the production of organic plant material

Recharge: occurs when water flows or seeps from the wetland into the surrounding groundwater

Redoximporphic features: spots or blotches of different color or shades of color interspersed within the dominant color in a soil layer (formerly referred to as mottles), that are formed by the processes of reduction and oxidation of iron and manganese oxides.

Respiration: the metabolic process by which an organism assimilates oxygen and releases carbon dioxide and other products of oxidation

Restoration, wetland: activities that seek to return a degraded wetland or a hydric soil area to a previously existing natural wetland condition

Riparian: typically occurring or growing along the banks of rivers and streams

Riverine: a freshwater system associated with a river; riverine wetlands are those that occur within the river channel and are dominated by emergent vegetation that remains only through the growing season

Sediment: suspended material that settles to the bottom of a liquid

Sink: area where nutrients, pollutants, heavy metals and other substances are collected, transformed by natural processes and/or are held in the soil or plants

Species richness: the level of diversity of species

Stewardship: behavior that exhibits a long-term commitment and sense of personal responsibility

Substrate: the mineral or organic material that forms the bed of a water body

Subsurface flow: water moving through the soil below the earth's surface

Taxa: groups of organisms or ecosystems categorized by common characteristics

Terrestrial: living on land or in the air, as opposed to aquatic (in water)

Threatened: any species likely to become endangered within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of its range

Toxic: a harmful, destructive or deadly chemical substance

Transpiration: the process of giving off vapor, in plants, through pores (stomata)

Value, wetland: benefits that specific wetland functions provide to humans, such as timber harvest flood control and sites for recreation

Vascular plant: any stemmed or rooted plant

Vernal: pertaining to or existing only part of the year

Water table: the depth or level below which the ground is saturated with water

Watershed: an area of land that drains to a particular body of water

Wetland complex: aggregation of wetlands and associated ecological features within a landscape

Zonation: the distribution of distinct zones of plant communities composed of different species

Zoning: the practice of dividing land into parcels pertaining to its use